



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building • 1111 Washington Street SE • Olympia, WA

July 24, 2000

Ningjin Liu
Idaho Power Company
Post Office Box 70
Boise, Idaho 83707

Dear Mr. Liu:


On July 18, a group of salmon managers (National Marine Fisheries Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) submitted System Operation Request (SOR) 2000-26 requesting that Idaho Power Company continue drafting Brownlee Reservoir once Idaho Power had satisfied the requirements for delivering the Biological Opinion water volumes from Brownlee itself and from the upper Snake Basin (approximately elevation 2050' at Brownlee). The SOR did not stipulate a specific draft rate or ending reservoir level beyond stating that whatever operation that might occur would be consistent with the need to "assure the provision of the minimum flow of 9 KCFS for fall chinook migration and spawning in the fall in Hells Canyon." As with any SOR, the listed agencies are fully in support of the proposed operation.

The rationale behind the request was that flows in the lower Snake River are already critically low and reducing discharge once elevation 2050' has been reached would further reduce those flows. We are fully aware that any such operation is outside the scope of the Biological Opinion and the agreement between Idaho Power and the Bonneville Power Administration. Our hope was that our request for additional water would coincide with Idaho Power's generation needs for the remainder of the summer and a mutually beneficial operation could be planned. That was the reason the SOR did not stipulate draft rates or reservoir elevations, since we didn't know what Idaho Power's plans were for the summer. Such an operation is not without precedent. In 1998, Idaho Power continued to draft Brownlee once the Biological Opinion requirements had been satisfied. Although this was not intended as a fish operation, it had beneficial effects on late summer flow in the Snake River and was consistent with Idaho Power's needs.

At the Technical Management Team meeting on July 20, you requested a letter from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife re-stating their support for the SOR. Later that afternoon, you left a voice mail message for Christine Mallette, the Oregon representative on the Technical Management Team, that you needed a letter from the Oregon Governor's Office, instead. The SOR was submitted through the Technical Management Team (TMT), following the guidelines agreed to by all parties in the National Marine Fisheries Service's Regional Forum. In the past, Idaho Power has responded directly to SORs submitted through the TMT, so the group of salmon managers that submitted SOR 2000-26 are somewhat puzzled by your request for such a letter. If the TMT is not the appropriate forum for making such requests, then one possible recourse would appear to be the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission process.

In the interest of working toward a mutually beneficial outcome, we would appreciate hearing Idaho Power's position on SOR 2000-26 by early next week, since it appears you will reach 2050' elevation sometime this weekend. We request the Idaho Power Company respond as quickly as possible to this letter so we can resolve this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "James R. Nielsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being the most prominent part.

James R. Nielsen
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Co-Chairperson, Fish Passage Advisory Committee

cc: Fish Passage Advisory Committee
Technical Management Team
James Hastreiter, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission